United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/41

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International Federation on Ageing, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19657 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

The wellbeing and security of women is negatively impacted by the accumulation of various levels and types of gender-based discrimination experienced throughout their lives. Therefore, it is unsurprising in later life, women have significantly diminished financial capacity and less access quality services and public infrastructure. Older women, or 54 per cent of those over the age of 60 years and 61 per cent over the age of 80 years, face the potential of being invisible in critical components of sustainable development unless disparities are addressed urgently. The International Federation on Ageing, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, strongly advocates for the Commission to address the following inequalities experienced by older women.

Social Protection Systems

Older women face a high risk of experiencing poverty due to a multitude of factors reported in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) recent World Report on Social Protection (2017). The persistent gender gap in access to income security in older age mirrors the gender inequalities in employment and labour market trends. The contributory pension coverage is lower among women as their formal employment wages tend to be lower and women are often more likely to shorten or interrupt employment, work in precarious or informal employment, and take on a larger portion of family and homemaking duties. These factors contribute to women having lower pension entitlements than men to provide for income security in later life.

According to the International Labour Organization, universal health care is an essential component of social protection floors and fighting poverty. However, 38 per cent of the global population does not have health protection and only five per cent have no out-of-pocket spending for long-term care. This is problematic as older women experience disproportionately higher financial insecurity when universal health coverage is inadequate. In part, this is because older women have an increased risk of having multiple chronic comorbidities and/or disabilities in comparison to both younger women and older men. To make matters worse, since older women are more likely to have less financial means, they are less able to pay for and access health services if universal health care is not available.

Sustainable Infrastructure

Sustainable infrastructure is required to enable and encourage people of all ages and genders to participate in society through employment and social and civic activities. However, components of infrastructure such as transportation, water, electricity, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are not designed with consideration of diverse functional abilities or promoting age-inclusivity. Older women can also face barriers to utilizing infrastructure developments such as prohibitive transportation costs or lack of ICT accessibility and training.

Recommendations

With a vision of a world where the rights and choices of older women are protected and respected, the undersigned advocate for the Commission on the Status of Women to call on Member States to adopt the following recommendations.

Specific social protection measures should be put in place to mitigate inequalities experienced by older women and bridge the income security gap in later life (thus addressing SDG 1), such as:

- Provide supplementary coverage through non-contributory pension schemes.
- Expand coverage to a wider range of employment sources including self-employment.
- Recognize care provision as 'decent work' and facilitate fairer distributions of care responsibilities.
- Implement preventative policy measures such as removing differential pension ages, crediting pension accounts during parental leave, and other policies that promote equitable treatment of men and women.
- Ensure that universal health coverage includes medical products, assistive devices as well as programs for the prevention of NCDs to enable women to improve and maintain their functional ability across the life course without experiencing unnecessary financial hardship.

Infrastructure and technology must be more inclusively provided to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 9 and 11, thus enabling women to continue living full and productive lives as they grow older. To do so, Member States are invited to consider:

- Supporting municipalities to join the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.
- Consulting with older women for major infrastructure developments.
- Implementing programs and policies that promote digital inclusion of older women.

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) thanks the Commission for the opportunity to advocate for the rights of older women and is ready and willing to collaborate on initiatives to ensure that older women are not left behind in advancements in social protection, public services, and sustainable infrastructure.

Endorsed by:

AARP

AGE Platform Europe

HelpAge International

International Council on Social Welfare

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/42

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International Network of Liberal Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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18-19658 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

Women in Big Data and Technology

The Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved if women are able to participate in an equal way by unlocking the growth potential with women and girls taking an equal part in Big data and technologies.

International Network of Liberal Women is a network of women worldwide whose main objective is to advance the empowerment of all women and girls worldwide and to develop women's awareness of their rights and political, economic, social and cultural responsibilities. The network, which reinforces relationships and exchanges among women all over the world, believes there is a rich opportunity for women on all levels; especially through liberalism, to come together and share expertise for mutual benefit and empowerment of all women and girls.

Lack of Access to data and information gaps are often impediments to achieving these goals. The 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for a data revolution for Sustainable Development Goals. The data revolution has been driven by explosions in the volume of data, the speed with which data is produced, the number of producers of data, and the range of issues on which there is data. These Big data systems are generated by new technologies such as mobile phones and emerging "internet of things", but also include other data sources, such as social media, social protection systems and citizen-generated data2. In the context of sustainable development, this also suggests the integration of these new sources of data with traditional data in order to produce high quality information that is more detailed, timely, and relevant. These shifts in data systems also create opportunities for greater openness and transparency, which must be leveraged in a way that protects privacy and human rights, taking into account data inclusivity.

In some countries organizations are working on women's empowerment and gender equality, recognizing the potential of integrating big data and analytics into programs and policies, and aiming to identify applications of big data that could lead to impactful solutions. Therefore, it is natural for these organizations to collaborate to ensure that the data revolution for sustainable development responds to women's needs and issues of data inclusion. Girls, young women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, are encouraged to pursue their studies and work in science, engineering, maths and technology and to ignore negative and stagnating reactions.

International Network of Liberal Women believes United Nations Women can play an important role ensuring that the data revolution for sustainable development is inclusive, not only by incorporating Big data1 and analysis of planning and decision making, but also by working with governments, policy leaders, and the broader international community to address the gaps in women's access to information technology and other tools and activities that generate new sources of data. Several pilot projects have demonstrated the feasibility of using big data analytics for sustainable development. Insights regarding mobility patterns, social interactions, social protection systems, sentiments and attitudes, economic activity, early warning, and community well-being can be derived from aggregated, privacy-protected datasets.

Over the past few years it has been confirmed that biological differences, such as women experiencing higher levels of anxiety and less tolerance for stress, explained why there were fewer women in top engineering and policy leadership positions in companies.

Women's under-representation today means women's exclusion in a surely predominantly digital future. This has enormous implications, socially and

economically in terms of lost growth, whilst the demand for skilled information technology professionals is growing. Women comprise approximately half the population, yet they are starkly under-represented in the digital economy. The gender digital gap is mirrored in low and decreasing numbers of girls taking up science, technology, engineering, mathematics studies, of women choosing information technology — related professions, of women's under-representation in management in the information technology industry and of the few women-led and women-founded tech companies.

Many girls begin their familiarization with information technology in a world of gender stereotypes; science, technology, engineering, mathematics studies and digital industries have systematically been portrayed as a male domain. The roots of the digital and technology divide are therefore embedded in societal stereotypes of what is appropriate for each gender including gender attributions as regards professional paths and abilities. These factors intertwine and reinforce the digital divide.

Providing girls and young women with advanced digital skills early on and encouraging them to take higher education in science, technology, engineering, mathematics fields will not only advance them individually, it will bring particularly high economic returns in the digital age and technology. The acquisition of digital skills by girls and women is a prerequisite for female empowerment and inclusive and equitable access to digital economy gains and social protection systems. The technical career opportunities should be better highlighted to female students at all levels, starting early on. Organizations and businesses have a role to play too. Attracting women into digital roles should be a key focus for all businesses not only to improve diversity of teams but to ensure the future sustainability of that rapidly growing industry.

A joint program of work around the use of Big data and analytics should be established in order to improve the lives of women and girls.

Today 90 per cent of the jobs require basic digital and technology skills, at the same time North Africa and Europe faces a shortage in information technology specialists. Forty per cent of enterprises trying to recruit information technology specialists report difficulties in getting qualified people. The cyber security field is an example of a massive skills shortage. The data gap, predicted to hit 1.8 million globally by 2022 and 350 000 in Europe alone, is exacerbated by lack of female representation. Women comprise only 11 per cent of the workforce, according to the "Women in Cyber security" research. This is compounded by the fact that women are under-represented at the inception level, be it in hardware manufacturing or software development. It is essential to have gender-neutral innovations in fields/businesses working on connected vehicles, robotics, Fablabs open hardware and Internet of Things.

The lack of critical mass of girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education affects access to digital careers. Once there, staying and growing in those careers is harder for women than it is for men. Lack of role models, weak business networks, stereotypes, bias and low financial support all combine to push women out. According to several reports such as "The state of the European tech" only 6 per cent of their selected European venture-backed companies have women chief executive officers.

Studies show also that female entrepreneurs face particular difficulties in accessing start-up capital necessary to set up and grow their businesses. One reason for that is that venture capital networks are male-dominated and prefer to fund male-led businesses. Another reason is that many women lack collaterals required by traditional financial institutions to prove they are credit-worthy.

International Network of Liberal Women promotes better use of big data, digital technologies for teaching, and digital competences among women and girls. It stresses the need for young women and girls around the world to learn basic algorithms and computational thinking to become active creators and leaders.

Therefore, International Network of Liberal Women calls upon the United Nations Women to:

- promote the filling of gender gaps in "traditional" data, including areas where women's activities, women's needs, women's interests, and threats women face are largely invisible, to get a richer, more nuanced understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment issues;
- to facilitate real-time situational monitoring of gender indicators and progress on gender equality across the Sustainable Development Goals;
- to adopt an ideal platform of innovation to strategize on how to contribute and strengthen and promote digital skills and education for girls and women;
- to convince all Governments, businesses to recruit and invest in diversity because research shows that the collective intelligence of a team outperforms individual abilities and the number of women on the team enhances collective capabilities of the team;
- to adopt an ideal platform to streamline women- in- digital in all relevant activities and platforms to make them more inclusive of women for example the outreach campaign for Digital Opportunities, Social Protection Systems and pilots in Europe;
- -to ensure and give women in technology their voice and visibility (By providing an equal playing field and advancing women);
- to convince all Governments, businesses to create the leaders of the future by identifying potential female leaders and mentoring them appropriately to unlock the impact of diversity.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/43

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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18-19659 (E) 061218

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Statement

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand), in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2010, works for gender justice and equality for all women and girls. Since its establishment in 2000, Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand)'s primary objectives are to monitor, review and report on progress in advancing the well-being of women and girls both in New Zealand and in the Pacific sub-region. The organisation's founding documents state our recognition of the indigenous Māori women as tangata whenua and the Treaty of Waitangi as the founding document of New Zealand. This all-encompassing recognition of all women also takes into account the many ethnicities and cultures of everyone who reside in and call New Zealand home. New Zealand is now the most ethnically diverse country in the world; many women and their children also identify with multiple ethnicities.

The priority themes for The Commission on the Status of Women 63 2019 are social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. These priority themes allow our organisation to highlight the work we are achieving and to empower women worldwide to dialogue together to find solutions for all. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has now placed much more emphasis on highlighting the inclusion of all women in recognition of the growing disparity within and between populations of women. The Committee in its Concluding Observations on New Zealand's eighth periodic report 2018 noted, with concern, that indigenous women and ethnic minority women, in New Zealand, are still exposed to intersecting forms of discrimination particularly when accessing public services such as health, justice and education.

In August 2018 Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) was gratified to host an Indigenous women's conference, on International Indigenous Day, and all presenters were indigenous women. The topics ranged from biodiversity and climate changes in New Zealand to the ongoing effects of colonisation on indigenous women and also indigenous teenage mothers. New Zealand needs to rethink its approach to incorporate and celebrate diversity and the intersectionality of women.

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) has deliberately fostered and developed strong connections with other women's organisations. This provides many opportunities to enable women who reside at the fringes of society and who struggle to have their issues raised, to amplify their voices and tell their own stories. Gender inequality is most visible across all levels of society when women are forced into the adversarial systems of the judiciary where power and control are clearly discerned. Positive collaboration with non-governmental organisations has resulted in a review of New Zealand's Family Court system. We urge all member states worldwide to address gender justice for women.

Another example of positive collaboration was the announcement by the Under-Secretary to the Minister of Justice (Domestic and Sexual Violence Issues) at the Maori Women's Welfare League's National Conference, September 2018, of a whole of government approach to end family and sexual violence. This announcement was most poignant given there is a concentration of high levels of domestic and sexual violence perpetrated against indigenous women and girls. The challenge rests with the State, to implement the necessary social protection systems to fully realise the proposed strategy that could eliminate all aspects of violence from all sectors of society in New Zealand. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) strongly encourages other countries to consider this integrated whole of government approach model. A statement of support in The Commission on the Status of Women 63's agreed

conclusions for a whole of government approach to ending violence would be very powerful.

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) belongs to the Access Matters Alliance New Zealand. Access Matters works towards creating a truly accessible Aotearoa New Zealand. Our organisation believes that access to public services must be more than just simply access to a building, a service or information but more importantly that our disabled friends and family can access these services with ease, and dignity. While New Zealand has not kept up with international developments and trends on access to public services, the New Zealand government has now begun working on accessibility legislation.

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) believes that it is critical that both government and non-government enterprises recognise the special needs of some groups of women and girls who are particularly vulnerable. There can be no true empowerment of all women and girls when certain groups are left behind. Our organisation values equally and respects all women in New Zealand. Indigenous, Pacific and ethnic minority women continue to suffer from stereotyping and racism. This leads to differential outcomes across the full spectrum of employment which then magnifies the intersectionality between welfare dependence, extreme poverty and homelessness.

Access to justice for indigenous, Pacific and ethnic minority women is too often denied due to lack of funds, and the difficulty is compounded by the diminishing of legal aid. The social protection systems for women that should be in place are very much wanting in New Zealand. We strongly recommend an increase in legal aid to those women most vulnerable.

The government should provide alternatives to detention especially for soft crimes such as driving and state offences. Justice and the police need to adhere to the Bangkok Rules and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders. These actions by the government would ameliorate many of the injustices towards incarcerated women and girls. There is now an urgent need for the practical application of sound social protection systems for the safety of women and children throughout the world especially during this time of great upheaval due to forced migration, wars and famine. We demand that The Commission on the Status of Women 63 must provide a forum for these issues to be discussed.

Climate change has severe implications for New Zealand and our neighbours, the Pacific Island nations. Our countries are situated in the largest ocean on the planet hence the danger of rising sea levels is a very real threat to our existence and to the environment. Pacific Island nations now experience higher temperatures, small islets are disappearing into the ocean and erosion is occurring on all sides. Homes that were once beside the sea have been swallowed up by the sea, and women can no longer plant any root crops due to the salinity of the water. Internationally the world needs to commit to decreasing carbon emissions into the atmosphere. When we consider sustainable development, the decreasing ability of women in Pacific Island nations to live on their land is rapidly diminishing. The review theme of women's empowerment is the link to sustainable development.

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) considers the concept of sustainable equity should be embedded throughout all facets of government actions and secured within a five-year plan for women that would be organic to and based on the Sustainable Development Goals. We would encourage all member states to adopt an action plan based on the Sustainable Development Goals. The New Zealand government has been very slow to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into a women's action plan. We strongly urge the Commission to encourage all

member States to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into domestic law as a critical action.

Women's work is critical to the global economy, peace-making, education and caring for the next generation. Looking forward to the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) believes that while much has been achieved in women's rights, there still remain many challenges for women and girls both nationally and internationally. Women's rights are human rights.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/44

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19660 (E) 061218

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Statement

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations welcomes and affirms the priority theme "Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality" of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Social protection must be regarded as an undebatable human right and its universal attainment as a milestone for the Agenda 2030. Those who receive social protection are supported and strengthened in particular in the vulnerable phases of their lives, such as childhood, parenthood or old age, and have access to public services that prevent poverty, that ensure the right to health and that enable individuals and families to inclusively participate in the social and economic spheres of society.

As young medical professionals and future health care providers, we experience day by day what we also find in the statistics: Gender is still a major socioeconomic determinant and for many an impediment to health. As an example, according to the International Labour Organisation, only 41,1 per cent of mothers with new-borns receive effective social protection coverage through a maternity benefit. That leaves roughly 83 million mothers without any support from the state — exactly in that life phase when one is vulnerable to poverty and hunger, to poor health and to exclusion from labour and economic growth. Being pressured to keep working during the late stages of pregnancy and to return to work prematurely not only puts mothers at risk, but also their children already from their first breaths.

Thus, looking at the advancement of social protection systems requires a gender lens. Only by investing in accessible and affordable public services and by ensuring state support that provides protection throughout the life cycle, we can empower women and their families. We can empower them to live healthy, to access education, to have job security, to contribute with their full potential to the development of the world they call home.

For this, we call on state leaders to commit to the following actions:

- Invest in gender-sensitive urban planning and development of infrastructure that provides safety for those who are at risk of experiencing discrimination, threats or violence, e.g. on the basis of their perceived gender,
- Bridge the gender pay gap, ensuring equal remuneration for equal work,
- Implement social protection coverage for the informal economy and encourage the redistribution of unpaid care work within families and among genders,
- Establish the opportunity of paid parental leave and flexible working arrangements to ensure women's ability to compete in the labour market,
- Ensure that legislation protects girls and women from experiencing gender-based violence or discrimination and actively support survivors of violence. Also ensure that girls and women receive education to know about their rights and are able to access judicial public services.

In the complexity of the role of social protection systems and public services for a sustainable and gender-empowered future, achieving Universal Health Coverage is a key ingredient. Adequate health care infrastructures, goods and services must be available no matter the geographical area and community. Health care must be accessible and provided without discrimination based on health status, race, ethnicity, education, age, gender, sexuality, disability, language, religion, nationality, income, or other status. However, particularly in rural areas, this aim is far from being

achieved, with 56 per cent of the population lacking health coverage according to the International Labour Organisation. Women are disproportionately likely to lack the social protection they need, especially where close and frequent health care is needed due to limited ability to care for oneself, e.g. in old age.

Societal stigma, inequality and discrimination based on gender perceptions are barriers to Universal Health Coverage and therefore, national-level human rights laws need to be installed to ensure that essential services including sexual and reproductive health services are available. For health care to do its part on the gender equity agenda, it is high time to regard sexual and reproductive health services as part of essential health care and through its provision ensure every girl's and woman's right to decide freely over the body, to be free from physical and sexual violence and coercion and to execute their right to determine if and when to have children.

In our deepest commitment to Health for all, we call on the Member States to:

- Become leaders to design and implement Universal Health Coverage, responding to the basic health needs of all patients, especially young people and those with hindered access to health care through poverty or social discrimination and with little representation in decision-making spaces,
- Ensure access for all women to sexual and reproductive health services, with special regard to coverage of maternal health care and access to family planning methods including modern contraceptives and the access to safe abortion services, independent from income and social status,
- Enhance aid effectiveness by maximising developmental aid to low- and middle-income countries to achieve and maintain universal health coverage packages that fit their social, political and cultural contexts.

Tailoring the advancement of social protection systems in a gender-sensitive manner will not only set a cornerstone for gender equity — it will make our generation human rights leaders, it will make our populations stronger and it will be a determinant of our way towards a sustainable world that serves all of us.

Statement

Making social protection, public services and infrastructure investments responsive to women and girls

Improving the status of women and girls is indisputably central to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Women and girls continue to face a plethora of challenges including unemployment, limited representation in decision-making and inadequate access to social protection and quality public services.

Governments committed to integrating gender perspectives into policies and programmes for sustainable development; however, as highlighted in the 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, progress remains uneven across and within countries. Acknowledgement of the importance of gender equality and women's social, economic, and political empowerment by States and non-State actors has not been matched by concrete policy implementation and demonstrable change on the ground (E/CN.6/2016/3). For instance, social protection systems in many countries are not set up in a way that accommodate the needs of women and girls or encourage transformation of gender relations in society toward equality and empowerment. Moreover, comprehensive and adequate health care through life — a prerequisite for achieving the health-related Sustainable Development Agendas and a human right for women and girls — is still not fulfilled for most women and girls across the world. Services attending to sexual and reproductive health notably maternal care and prevention of gender-based violence are still lacking. Public health insurance schemes do not cover all segments of the society, leaving women especially the poor and the most vulnerable, at the mercy of out-of-pocket health expenditures. Deficiencies in health care programmes intensify the burden on women, who usually shoulder the load of care giving responsibilities within their household.

Considerable evidence has shown that policies on gender equality and non-discrimination fail to address the issues of older women. Provision of economic security, protection and health care attending to the needs of older women is a big gap across regions. Worldwide, women outlive men. The gap in life expectancy between men and women was 4.3 years in 2000 and remained almost the same by 2016 (Global Health Observatory data, World Health Organization 2018). Given their longer life expectancy and prevailing gender norms, women often take caregiving roles for their family members and male partners in their old age. Moreover, evidence has shown that older women will most likely to experience poverty and serious health chronic diseases, such as dementia and mental illness, without any economic or healthcare support. In many countries, coverage of pension programmes and care is limited to older women, in others is completely lacking.

Social security schemes across the world, with few exceptions, conspire against women's equal access to social protection especially those working in the informal sector or assuming unpaid care giving responsibilities. The role social protection plays to end poverty (Goal 1), recognize unpaid care work (Goal 5) and achieve decent work (Goal 8) is clearly articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals. Across the world, the provision of care is not haphazard or random in families; women and girls are the primarily family members tasked with the responsibility of looking after the sick, children, the elderly, or the disabled within their households. The neglect of the value of the unpaid care in social protection systems continue to persist where it is treated as cost-free resources that bridge the gaps when public services are not affordable, obtainable or reachable. Social protection policy needs to recognize, decrease and redistribute the unequal burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women and girls.

Access to public services is another huge challenge that may jeopardize realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Considerable evidence has shown that unavailability of care providers, long travel distances to care facilities and inadequate transportation system hampers women and girls' ability to reach care services. Mental health services remain exceptionally limited and is of particular concern in conflict settings, as insecurity and violence can seriously increase prevalence of depression, anxicty and post-traumatic stress.

Considerable evidence has shown that, war and conflicts impact on women and girls wellbeing and livelihood; as many of them lack access to physical security, safe water and sanitation especially within Internally Displacement People and refugee camps. In conflict settings, the absence of rule of law and lack of protections schemes and needed infrastructures expose women and girls to sexual violence and exploitation as they endeavour to access locations of care or livelihoods. In addition, the time women and girls spend on fetching and processing water and collecting firewood comprise the effective use of their time on education or livelihood activity.

Last and not least, normative, legal and policies frameworks of many countries fail to address barriers that restrict women and girl's enjoyment of their rights in social protection and services adequately. In many countries, maternity leave is not adequate for women to strike the balance between child's rearing and job's responsibilities and thus are insufficient incentive for women to join the labour force. The normative, legal and policies framework and institutional measures play crucial role in either supporting or undermining women's access to social protection, quality services and sustainable infrastructure. There are significant normative gaps pertaining to women's rights in protection systems across the world. Without a fundamental transformation in this status quo, reaching the Sustainable Development Goals will be hard to achieve. The entire 2030 Agenda must empower women and girls through gender-responsive implementation and robust mechanisms to hold all duty bearers to account (E/CN.6/2016/3).

Recommendations:

a) Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks: to safeguard the human rights of women and girls and ensure equitable and inclusive access to protection and public services. Harmonization of national laws and policy frameworks with the international treaties and standards is required to ensure gender justice, inclusion and fairness for all, especially the most vulnerable and excluded notably older women, women and girls care givers, women in the informal sector, women with disabilities, among others. Ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and their human rights are central in national strategies, tools and instruments for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and mainstream gender perspectives in all policies and programmes, at all levels and by all government departments, to ensure gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda (E/CN.6/2016/3).

b) Adopt a life-cycle approach in addressing the gender specific needs of women and girls in social protection. As social exclusion accumulates over the life course of women and girls especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. A woman's care burden in her early years in life can have consequences on her educational opportunities and attainment, which in turn influence her career options and income potential, all of which would eventually lead to economic insecurity in old age.

c) Scale up investments in care infrastructure, safe and reliable transport to support women's mobility and access to public services, and support women's livelihoods activities. Gender responsive and affordable transportation systems, street lighting, clean water resource, adequate and separate sanitation facilitate women and girls' access to locations, places, products, health services and economic opportunities.

d) Increase investments in social care services to address the care deficit and the unequal share of unpaid care labour. Policy-makers must recognize care as a productive economic activity and acknowledge it as a right in terms of both provision and receipt. Care responsibilities have to be addressed outside the family sphere. Social protection and policy have to treat care tasks as jobs that must be rewarded and covered.

e) Protect women and girls in conflict zones through ensuring gender sensitive and responsive services and infrastructures such as energy, sanitation and clean water to promote their wellbeing, livelihood and minimize risks such as gender-based violence.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/46

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original:

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Institute of Cultural Affairs International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19662 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

Ukraine: A Socio-economic Process that Ensures a Fair Gender Balance

A large community of Ukrainian women from among the authorities, business and civil society expressed their willingness to actively participate in the sixty-third session of the Commission on the integration of advanced world experience in the development of human capital in Ukraine. In our opinion, this is necessary for:

- Establishing informal contact with the Commission on the Status of Women for advice from the Economic and Social Council;
- Establishment of productive business relations, practically focused on the development of human potential and the use of its hidden resources;
- Creation of international, including exchange programs for the development of local communities and their effective implementation in ensuring a fair gender balance in Ukraine.

Ukraine, like many other countries, continues to be at the point of bifurcation. Ukrainian women are increasingly asking themselves the following questions:

- "Why and why do people, especially leaders, act one way or another, and how does this relate to the thoughts and attitudes of ordinary people?";
- "What tools, models, technologies, approaches are most effective for resolving territorial conflicts and establishing peaceful processes of the country's development?";
- "What is the role of each woman in the socio-economic growth of the welfare of Ukraine?"

Today, Ukrainian women are the leading (in percentage / 75 per cent of the training participants are women) side of the transformation of Ukraine. They readily advocate for the integration of their experience, knowledge and intelligence into the world community, since living on the territory of a geopolitical rift and armed conflict, they understand that only by joining efforts can you restore and preserve peace in the country. In many ways, the path to the revival of Ukraine is the creation of a sustainable socio-economic process that ensures a fair gender balance.

As a result of the twenty-seven-year administration of the country, which is focused on meeting the private interest of individuals, we are now facing the following:

- Reduction of the population of Ukraine by more than 5 million people;
- The annexation of the Crimea and the armed invasion of Russia into the Lugansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine;
- The emergence of 1.5 million internally displaced persons from the zones of conduct of armed conflict;
- Over 10,000 deaths of Ukrainians in the combat zone in the east of Ukraine, of which about 3,000 are military and 7,000 are civilians;
- The country is in the top ten countries in the world in terms of corruption;
- The level of social protection of all social and marginal groups is consistently in the zone of systemic violation of both the Constitution of Ukraine and human rights;
- The economic gap between the poor and the rich is growing rapidly;
- The rule of law is not implemented.

At the same time, Ukrainian society is consolidating and is looking for effective ways to counter the current inefficient, oligarchic, perverse system of government. Ukraine is rapidly integrating into the European and world community, both at the level of adaptation of European and world legislation, and at the level that has become more accessible due to the visa-free regime for Ukrainians crossing European borders. Women increase their activity, looking for effective ways of interaction and mutually beneficial partnership between themselves.

Traditionally, the Ukrainian woman plays the role of Bereginya, the guardian of the family, home and land. That is recognized by men. Therefore, they calmly perceive women as equal partners alongside themselves in business, public projects, public administration, and even as their leaders. Women constitute 54 per cent of the population of Ukraine.

In its turn, at the level of key decisions in the country there are only approximately 12 per cent of women in relation to 88 per cent of men which leads to a serious gender imbalance in government decisions that have already been adopted, which demonstrate the lack of human value and social protection. Under these conditions, there is no possibility of a balanced socio-economic process, which is designed to provide decent social protection to the people of Ukraine.

United Nations statistics shows that 70 per cent of income received by women invests in the social sector, while men are engaged in the accumulation of a resource for the purpose of its replication. The modern model of the socio-economic process in Ukraine is 12 per cent of the social protection of people and 88 per cent of the economy, which is created by men for themselves.

The result of the key decisions taken by men in the social sector of Ukraine is the amount of the established minimum pension amount for citizens of Ukraine, social benefits for disabled people, single mothers who suffered from the Chernobyl disaster, who were injured in the combat zone. Today, this is two times less than the minimum wage in Ukraine, which is less than USD2 a day and more than two times less than the recommended United Nations standards. This is a direct violation of the Basic Law — the Constitution of Ukraine, Article 46. Citizens have the right to social protection, including the right to ensure them in case of full, partial or temporary disability, loss of a breadwinner, unemployment due to circumstances beyond their control, and also in old age in other cases provided by law. Pensions, other types of social benefits and benefits, which are the main source of subsistence, must ensure a standard of living not lower than the subsistence minimum established by law. More and more often, such social policy is called the genocide of the Ukrainian people.

A huge problem is the provision of social housing for internally displaced persons, of whom there are more than 1,5 million people, as well as the provision of high-quality free medical services to them and the inability to participate in the upcoming elections.

Equal online access to obtaining administrative services for all social groups in Ukraine, including the blind, is positive. But the topic of social protection is not visible and priority on the websites of the President of Ukraine and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

On April 1, 2014, the Local Government Reform started in Ukraine, which opened many new and additional opportunities for women. The reform has enabled women in rural areas to take a leading position in local government, which allows them to take an active part in the formation of local policy and its implementation.

In Ukraine, the women's political lobby is also gaining momentum; among women, there is a growing desire to serve people and the growth of professionalism in exercising civilian control over the actions of bodies of all levels of government.

One of the solutions to achieve a balance in the socio-economic process, the implementation of gender equality and social protection policies are training women in democratic leadership, analysing public policy, ethics of public administration, participatory management tools that will allow women of Ukraine to be bold and professional in making key decisions state and local level.

The Institute of Cultural Affairs International, uniting 42 countries around the world around the Technology of Participation in the implementation of its mission "Human Development", for five years of active work in Ukraine has implemented many different initiatives for the development of local communities at the "government-business-community". Strategic planning, facilitation, participatory leadership and participatory management have become one of the leading trends in the development of the country.

The world experience of more than 2000 facilitators of the Institute of Cultural Affairs International, assembled into a single technology Participative Strategic Planning, successfully works today in thousands of organizations at various levels in the post-Soviet space, where effective participative methods of consensus and management are being introduced. More than 1,000 facilitators work in Ukraine, and as many more in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Many of them are involved in local and state development projects. All this gives Ukraine the opportunity to take a leading position among the post-Soviet countries in all segments of the development of local communities.

This, in its turn, makes it possible to implement universal human democratic values in the daily life of local communities, and also makes possible the successful implementation of the United Nations goals in the field of human rights and sustainable development until 2030 in Ukraine.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/47

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Centre Européen de Recherche et de Prospective Politique-CEREPPOL, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19663 (E) 061218

Please recycle

Statement

Sustainable integration of women through welfare policies promoting effective equality at all stages

In view of the importance of this issue for the 2019 Program of Work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the enforcement of women's social access to welfare systems of protection in the world is a fundamental step forward in building non-linear bridges among models of perception about their multi-faceted roles. As an example, the impact of Europeanisation has brought about, respectively, increasing incentives to social convergence between European Union States on that topic. Of course, this has not solved the issue of gender inequality in other related areas (work, employment, access to highly qualified jobs), although it has improved it by enlightening women's and girls' integration in the whole society. In Europe, the convergence of the policy vision has made things changed and it has shaken minds.

The European experience over the last 15 years in social recognition and protection of women shows that Welfare regimes are structured around a particular organizing principle. Individual empowerment (Liberal Anglo-Saxon), statist egalitarianism (Social-Democratic Nordic) or institutional partnership (Corporatist Continental) could be singled out as core tenets in the cases of the three well-known welfare pillars of the European Union Society. Looking at the global solidarity pattern, there are countries where families (and family ties) are fairly "strong", whereas in others it is "weak". Both Central and Northern Europe are characterized by weak family links, and the Mediterranean region by strong family ties. According to this opinion, differences have deep historical roots and this have also a decisive input in all social-policy making when referring to the existing social protection systems for women.

In this regard, South European welfare is characterized by the central role played by the family and its interpenetration in all areas of welfare production and distribution, particularly as regards income and services. The interaction mode by the family with the State and many public bodies, on the one hand, and the institutions of the civil society, on the other hand, has made available a strong household micro-solidarity and this has changed social relations and social categories on the long term. In North European countries, the family does not assume this role. The family is one of the domains where the greatest changes have taken place over recent generations. The roles of men and women have globally changed with women in most European countries enjoying roughly the same educational opportunities as men. Within the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, family policy constitutes an important component of the welfare state policies.

These countries are known for their extensive support for families with children through policies aiming to reconcile work and family life, to share paid and unpaid work more equally between men and women, and to provide solutions that reflect the interest of the child in relation with the interest of mothers. Finally, welfare-policies in these countries help to re-distribute economic resources and in this way alleviate child poverty and promote women's equal access to public services.

Today, in many families from Southern to Northern Europe the role of women is still pivotal, as they often cared for children or older relatives at the cost of erratic careers or full withdrawal from the lor market. In the last two decades, women have been assuming a role of "super-powered-women" in the household without enjoying any Return on Investment for her "free" non-economic status. This means that female activity in the formal labour market is not accompanied by a decrease in their

responsibilities within the household, and these combined statuses have an effective impact on wellness, on mental-health.

Despite the adjustments needed to ensure maximum effectiveness, the European Union countries are converging to a single goal: they are setting-up new policy trajectories aiming to provide basic floors of welfare entitlements and rights to all citizens, even for women and girls. In the last 10 years, the European Union countries have protected refugees and asylum-seekers, especially women and children, from all forms of abuse, neglect, and to do so they have integrated public policies for family support in their global governance.

In line with the 2019 topic of the ad hoc Commission, and before embarking on an investigation of social protection policies for women, let's give a definition of welfare protection for women in the 21st Century. Such a protection may include family policy directly aimed at families with children, as well as services such as childcare, leave schemes, and income benefits such as family allowances. It would also address health care, labour market and social assistance policies, etc., that affect family life and children's opportunities later in life.

The search for gender equality has been a fundamental element in the development of the Scandinavian and Nordic welfare state, for example. In fact, the Scandinavian welfare model is often praised for having achieved the so-called "dual earner-dual career" model, in providing for a gender model where men and women benefit from a (more) equal degree share paid and unpaid work. Maybe this model could be implemented to comply with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals and meet the goals of gender equality and social protection for women?

In the field of equal access to opportunities and social protection, a number of interpretive-keys can be evoked at the occasion of the 63 The Commission on the Status of Women Conference to move forward on a high priority issue on women at an International level. Maybe these elements can be the basis of a renewed dialogue on harmonized system of protection?

In many countries, the option of a cash-for care benefit after parental leave is almost non-existent, or subject to incorrect or inappropriate use. However, this "option" creates, in countries where it is implemented, equality between parents who make use of state-subsidized childcare and those who care for their child at home. Because of its "institutional" nature, can it be possible to take this action at an international level?

In some other countries, women's social protection may consist in setting up measures centred on co-parenting ideals, and joint legal custody so that to emphasize the gender equality pattern. It may also consist in maintaining a higher degree of autonomy for single-parent families, by allowing single mothers incentives to keep their children (Boys and Girls) away from poverty.

Obviously, by developing or accepting gender-egalitarian attitudes in our global society, women's access to social protection systems will be emphasized through the entry into force of the concept of "best interest for Women and Girls" in the International Legislation. This supposes that all the transactions within the family unit are ae with the ultimate goal of fostering and encouraging women's contentment, security, mental health, and emotional development in private/public circles.

Our international Organization stresses the Commission on the Status of Women and States parties to consider our proposal. The importance to give a pragmatic pattern to the notion of "best interest of Women" (already quoted earlier) would be a sign. Mindsets could move beyond traditional paradigms on women and foster equal identity between women and men. We thank the Commission on the Status of Women for its commitments full of common sense.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/48

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Regards de Femmes, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19664 (E) 171218 191218

Please recycle

Statement

Regards de Femmes has worked for 20 years in France and around the world to ensure that all environments, public and private, in both rural and urban areas, offer all women and girls security, equality, recognition and respect for their dignity. In these environments that foster autonomy and freedom, women and girls must be able to study, receive care, have access to justice, work and flourish in the company both of men and of other women.

Regards de Femmes works to ensure that every woman and girl has a legal identity, the most important human right of all, and so that women, regardless of marital status, can register the births of their children.

Providing civil registration for girls and women at all stages of their lives, especially birth and marriage, is indispensable for the full enjoyment of all of their rights.

As it strives to achieve real equality of rights, duties and dignity between men and women, including women with disabilities, Regards de Femmes and its partners base their work on the international conventions that States have signed and for which they are accountable to their peoples.

- Article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights requires that States parties undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Covenant.
- The articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women concerning economic and social rights, in particular article 10 on education, article 11 on the elimination of discrimination in employment, article 13 on other areas of economic and social life and article 14 to ensure women participate in and benefit from rural development.

Regards de Femmes works with

- The State and local Governments, for the provision of public services;
- Companies, to show the social and economic interest and prepare comparative reports;
- Women "supplementary family workers", particularly the wives and daughters of farmers, to share best practices so that their work is recognized and compensated.

Work with the State and local Governments

Social protection has supported and leveraged the economic empowerment of women, although their rights depended on their status as wives or mothers. We are now calling for those rights to be individualized, including in tax matters.

Current austerity policies have led to cutbacks in public services and social benefits.

Women suffer disproportionately from their effects, and social progress is undermined:

- The threat of losing acquired rights and/or of halting progress in the gains yet to be made so that existing formal rights can be effectively exercised.

- Social spending helps to offset economic and social inequalities between women and men. A decrease in such spending primarily affects women, who constitute the overwhelming majority of low-wage earners.

Women and girls living in rural areas do not have the same supply of or the same access to community services as women in urban areas. Their children also suffer owing to this shortage. In those rural areas, there are fewer women and girls than men and boys.

The number of available jobs; health services; public transport options; schools, from kindergarten to university; and cultural and sporting centres is much smaller and difficult to access where they do exist.

Rural girls have less access to sexual and reproductive health services. Even in those areas where contraception cards are available, it is more difficult for girls to obtain and use them.

Associations provide very little support in rural areas.

For ten years, Regards de Femmes has been committed to expanding the Parity Act in rural communes. The association organizes meetings to encourage rural women to stand as candidates in local elections and then to train them in carrying out their duties and to exchange best practices.

The involvement of women in local politics is contributing to the implementation of public programmes for the empowerment of women and girls, through access to sustainable infrastructure at the level of the commune or groups of communes, including extended school hours for the care of young students before and after compulsory school hours, childcare outside term time, intercommunal creches, collective school transport for students and assistance for employees towards the cost of travel between home and the workplace.

Local authorities must establish comparative reports and assessments of their professional gender equality policies. Such reports must also mention local policies implemented by the community or group to promote equality between women and men.

Local authorities must include a gender equality rule in terms of reference, along with the submission of a comparative activity report, in the conditions for the award and execution of public procurement contracts.

Work with businesses

The fact that companies, whether family run or multinational, public or private, have a social responsibility is obvious. In order to reduce gender inequalities, companies should apply the following criteria:

- Make remuneration policies more transparent;
- Do not permit any wage gap between women and men performing the same work with the same skillset;
- Ensure that training is given to both women and men;
- Properly acknowledge the women in the company;
- Put an end to messages that discriminate against women;
- Have a board of directors with at least 30 per cent of women and encourage the presence of men in equality policy circles, councils and observatories (HeforShe);

- Comply with the requirements of professional equality; implement an action plan to eliminate wage differences and differences in career development between women and men. Participation in public bidding processes requires demonstrating gender diversity in employment in many European countries.

- To allow men and women to participate equally in domestic work, it is necessary to alleviate the family constraints on women and men through flexi-time, parental leave, day-care centres and shared business concierge services.

Regards de Femmes organizes workshops to raise awareness in businesses of the importance of adapting working conditions in line with the foregoing criteria, to showcase good practices and to encourage enterprises to leverage them. Entrepreneurs, women and men, are committed to changing the role of companies with regard to their partners (employees, shareholders, suppliers and customers) and society as a whole (environment, land, consumers and public health).

Regards de femmes organizes international meetings to share local actions in different countries in order to improve the visibility, the collective voice and representation of women in small and medium-sized enterprises and in family agricultural enterprises.

Rural women make up nearly half the agricultural labour force around the world but they are predominantly unpaid family workers. Moreover, owing to patriarchal traditions, women remain unable to inherit or own land in many countries. As a result, they have no access to the loans or training they need to be able to become more productive. The lack of a legal identity adds to these challenges.

The support for rural women's empowerment provided by our partner, the National Organization for Children, Women and the Family of Côte d'Ivoire, is a model. Its actions have led to the promotion, defence, protection and respect for women's rights, improved their technical, material and financial capacities and increased their incomes.

Access to land, the factors of production, inheritance and participation in decision-making forums in the villages are some of the notable advances to be shared with our other partners in developing countries.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/49

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19665 (E) 061218

Please recycle

Statement

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the Expanding Influence of the Female Entrepreneur

Today — and in both the near and distant future — the success and influence of small and medium-sized enterprises mandates that people open their minds to new possibilities, perspectives and, in many ways, to unknown economic factors. To build successful workplace models, we need to look at the players, explore bold new ideas, implement sweeping gender-centric changes, imagine new worlds, and, more than that, we might do what has never been done before.

We can no longer afford to let time slip through our hands without recognising and taking full advantage of the contributions and positive influence being generated by female entrepreneurs. To do this effectively, it is imperative that we understand that their required collaboration will necessitate support mechanisms that are going to differ, in some respects, from those that were put in place, and which have been enjoyed for so many years, by their male counterparts.

Statistics prove that small and medium-sized enterprises are laden with men and women possessing the skills and talents necessary to operate them successfully. Small and medium-sized enterprises growth, overall, has allowed participation of men and women to the extent that they can make their own career choices. It should be obvious that those currently and actively involved in small and medium-sized enterprises — both men and women - has changed dimensions in size and character as well. Sadly, however — and on a global basis — virtually all cultures appear to have an enormous blind spot regarding seeing the obvious when it comes to female entrepreneurs.

Approximately 50 per cent of the world's population is female and the opportunity to run one's own business is equally appealing to both genders. 126 million small and medium-sized enterprises worldwide are run by women, and that number is taking into consideration, only those businesses that are registered. There are many millions more — micro enterprises and crafts — that go unregistered because they are run out of the owner's home. These low-echelon businesses are primarily owned and operated by women. Both size and gender play a part in denying such businesses access to part of the networks, including such things as funding and the establishment of cross border trading connections.

Apart from observing how we have addressed small and medium-sized enterprises issues in general, over the last decade or two, we must start to leverage the rising numbers of women in business and consider the rapidly changing needs of both men and women as both business people and consumers. We need to factor in the diverse qualities and talents of all genders, across the world, in terms of how they impact commerce, consumer power and lifestyle demands.

The world is changing rapidly, with women creating a growing influence on a world that needs to embrace or, at the very least, implement a growing sensitivity toward providing for both family and community needs.

In the corporate world, it should much easier to be on a level playing field.

Women bring an entire range of new talents that are not only desirable but necessary for commercial success today. We need to open our eyes to the feminine values that empowers both men and women to appreciate the ways in which women add their unique outlook, talents and leadership skills to small and medium-sized enterprises growth, whether running their businesses on their own or in partnership with men.

We can experience that, where women have an entrepreneurial mind set, the potential to achieve great things is limitless. These emerging women entrepreneurs:

- display self-confidence in their performance,
- know how to effectively leverage any situation, and
- develop an enhanced potential for successful leadership, whether in an all-male, all-female or mixed gender environment.

We need to neutralize gender biased roadblocks and eliminate preconceived biases that genuinely exist regarding working effectively and collaboratively between different genders. Mixed teams, now, are well evidenced to be the most creative, productive and effective — whether led by men and women — when using feminine values.

Recognising the potential changes inherent in applying feminine leadership dynamics, it is mandatory that the appropriate development of women needs to be seen through a new lens; through a much broader, yet balanced, gender dynamic lens. Only then it is possible to ensure that authentic gender awareness produces the transformational influence necessary to modify, or create, a completely new workplace culture for small and medium-sized enterprises or global economy in general. There is no end of talent, but we may be making the mistake of looking at it as an end-result as opposed to planting the seeds of growth.

Given observations and studies of groups of female entrepreneurs actively involved in the small, medium and micro enterprise business sector, it is apparent that females seek success in ways that clearly have the potential to grow and flourish regardless of their stage in life. Of greater interest, is the fact that men are increasingly following the same line preferred by women, and so we see different types of men and women impacting the nature of effective small and medium-sized enterprises operation. The dynamic of feminine versus masculine traits and talents — in both men and women — when put under the microscope as tasks versus relationships, can determine the difference between success and failure. It is now more noticeable that the growing number of women in the small and medium-sized enterprises sector is impacting even the base understanding of the fluid nature of entrepreneurship, in that men too are likely to use historically recognized feminine values of collaboration, mutuality, genuine dialogue, shared feelings and transparency, which are essential elements of entrepreneurial success. It is a more relationship, trust based and service-oriented style which results in a more sustainable result with the added beneficial impact on the family and the larger community.

These values are now recognized as the most effective in achieving long term success and fulfilment. There are many studies that look at the feminine values principle across corporate and small and medium-sized enterprises markets. The same has also been studied extensively by McKinseys over ten years. It is titled "Women Matter," and it has been quoted in many research studies, such as the Ketchum Leadership Communication Monitor. This feminine-values leadership style is being used by both genders and has effectively proved, over a decade, to return greater and more sustainable profits and long-term growth. Further data detailed in The Athena Doctrine shares how women and wise men are running the world more effectively.

It is also important to note that most of the retail consumers today are female. We need to be aware not only of the growth of female entrepreneurs, and the increasingly adopted feminine style of leadership, but also the sheer power of the female consumer, means it is wise to take notice of the issue's women have with economic parity. Female small and medium-sized enterprises owners are establishing themselves and becoming deeply and significantly embedded in small and medium-sized enterprises culture. It just makes good business sense to recognize that women

are taking the lead alongside men. This is the prevailing wisdom about collaboration, leading with authenticity, and genuinely caring about both employees and customers. We must breed mutual trust between and among men and women. It is thoroughly documented that the best team is mixed-gender and that the resulting co-creation is changing the economic landscape profoundly and forever.

Our challenge, then, is to evaluate and understand all these elements separately and together:

- The changing workplace at home and in our communities;
- the rise of women in entrepreneurial business;
- small and medium-sized enterprises growth overall;
- fast paced technology evolution;
- scalability and economic prosperity, and most importantly;
- instilling feminine values that underpin a more sustainable growth curve benefiting not the few, but the many.

The World Union of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (WUSME) is committed to monitoring these areas and identifying suitable spaces and favourable conditions for the commitment of women entrepreneurs to be rewarded, bringing greater prosperity to the community.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/50

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Marie Stopes International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19666 (E) 101218

Please recycle

Statement

Marie Stopes International (MSI) is a global organisation providing woman-centred contraception, safe abortion, and post-abortion care services to women and girls in 37 countries. The high-quality services we provide empower women to choose if, and when, they have children. At the end of 2017 26.9 million women and men were using a method of contraception provided by us.

We would like to thank the Commission on the Status of Women for this opportunity to discuss the contributions of social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure towards gender equality and sustainable development. Given our mission this submission is focussing on current gaps in public services, in terms of sexual and reproductive healthcare, which are currently hampering progress towards gender equality.

The potential of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure

The role of social protection systems, public services, and sustainable infrastructure in reducing poverty is clear, and has been noted in variety of global policy frameworks — including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To ensure these systems empower women and girls, they must be designed in a gender-responsive manner and consider the underlying causes of inequality and exclusion of women and girls. Designing social protection systems, public services and infrastructure with women and girls at their centre is crucial to their sustainability and effectiveness.

A key underlying cause to women and girl's continued inequality is their exclusion from, or limited access to, woman-specific essential healthcare services. In particular, access to comprehensive contraception and safe abortion care. Until all women have access to these services, gender equality will be unachievable.

Access to comprehensive abortion care through public healthcare services: a key prerequisite to gender equality

Globally approximately 13 per cent of maternal mortality is attributable to unsafe abortion, with 23,000 preventable deaths each year, and 7 million more women experiencing complications. It is widely recognised that legal restrictions do not reduce the number of women seeking abortion, but merely increase the number of unsafe abortions. Globally 56 million abortions take place each year, with 25 million of these unsafe. Significantly more unsafe procedures occur in countries with more restrictive abortion laws.

It is therefore crucial that States recognise access to abortion as both an essential part of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and a prerequisite for gender equality. If we are to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 on gender equality, we cannot ignore the evidence that points towards the benefits of safe and legal comprehensive abortion services, and women and girls must be able to make decisions about their own bodies. As such, Marie Stopes International calls on States to reduce restrictions on access to safe and legal comprehensive abortion care services, and to ensure their availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality through public health services.

States must recognise that medical abortion has revolutionised access and that health systems and regulation must keep pace with its increased availability, ensuring quality of care and keeping decision making in women's hands. Choice must be protected, with some women preferring medical abortion because it enables privacy, autonomy and a greater sense of control, but some women choosing or needing surgical abortion.

We further call on states to recognise women's agency and autonomy and provide full and unrestricted access to woman-controlled methods of abortion including medical abortion. Where legal, regulatory, social or economic restrictions exist, States must make every effort to remove them and ensure universal access. Comprehensive abortion care services, including medical abortion, should be integrated into public health systems and universal health coverage schemes. Where Governments are unable to provide these services within the public health system, it should work with the private sector to ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of comprehensive abortion care services.

Conclusion

Gender equality cannot be achieved without gender-responsive social protection systems, public services, and social infrastructure investments. A key underlying cause to women and girls' inequality is inadequate access to comprehensive contraception and abortion care services, among other woman-specific health needs. In order to remove this barrier to gender equality, Marie Stopes International calls on States to:

- Reduce restrictions on access to safe and legal comprehensive abortion care services.
- Ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of comprehensive abortion care services, including access to woman-controlled methods such as medical abortion. This should be done primarily through the public health system, but States should work with the private sector to fill gaps in availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality.
- Include comprehensive abortion care services under universal health coverage schemes.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/51

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19667 (E) 191218

Please recycle

Statement

Families, Family Policies and Gender Equity

The United Nations through its Secretary General, has encouraged to promote "data collection and research on family issues and the impact of public policy on families" [A/70/61–E/2015/3], because "the very achievement of development goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to the achievement of those goals" [A/66/62–E/2011/4]. With that objective, the International Federation for Family Development has promoted the Project: Sustainable Development Goals and Families in partnership with The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Office of Research–Innocenti, the collaboration of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and with team of global experts on family issues from Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania and America, to developed pragmatic processes and procedures to assess how family policies work to affect different social progress goals (as defined in the Sustainable Development Goals) in different parts of the world; how the actions of non-government actors working in support of families contribute to the issue; and family attributes at household or national level impact on the effectiveness of the previously identified family interventions.

The following are some of the key findings of that research, regarding Sustainable Development Goal 5:

Families, Family Policies and Gender Equity

The wage gap between men and women remains wide everywhere. And exists, to the detriment of women, in all countries regardless of the stage of economic development. According to The International Labour Organization (ILO) data, four of the top ten worst countries in gender wage gap are The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries (Netherlands, Austria, United Kingdom, and Israel).

Women are less likely to work for pay and are more prone to work shorter hours and work part-time (ILO, 2016a). Data from 121 countries, covering 92 per cent of total employment worldwide, show that women represent less than 40 per cent of total employment, but makeup 57 per cent of those working part-time (ILO, 2016a). Women are more likely to have shorter job tenure and also more likely to have experienced more career interruptions than their male counterparts.

Although there is a general notion of the increase in women's labour force participation, the global female labour force participation rate decreased slightly (from 52.4 to 49.6 per cent) between 1995 to 2015, and the chance of women being on the job market remains about 27 percentage points lower than those for men (ILO, 2016a).

Families, family types and gender

The interplay within families profoundly affects power relationships between men and women through the allocation of roles and responsibilities for domestic work and upbringing of their children. How men and women spend their time within their family mirrors and reproduces the differences in their access to resources outside the home, namely income and political power. Gender inequality in the public sphere is both the cause and the result of the inequality in the private sphere.

At the individual level, men and women need to maintain an adequate balance between paid employment and family responsibilities. The proposed solutions to this dilemma vary among counties. The prescribed policies depend on many factors, such as the country' demographic structures (e.g. fertility, mortality, mobility and availability of immigrant workers), social policies (e.g. welfare system, family structure, and labour policies), labour markets structure (e.g. industry composition, degree of gender segregation), and gender-role ideologies (e.g. what is thought to be appropriate for men and women). Moreover, these solutions exist within a context of changes to family types, such as increasing rates of single-parent families (headed most often by women) in high income settings, and multi-generation households globally (as families respond to increasing housing costs and labour market demands).

Families, gender equity outcomes and links to other SDGs

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goal s aims to achieve gender equality not only as a fundamental human right but also as a necessary condition for achieving peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable development. Although gender equality is enshrined in a stand-alone goal of its own, it is a cross-cutting issue and is deeply interlinked with many of the other Sustainable Development Goals such as poverty (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), and education (Goal 4).

For example, women still make up a high proportion of people living in income poverty (e.g. Chant, 2006), and gender equality are expected to contribute to the reduction of poverty through improvement in women's income, health, education, and access to and control over land and other resources. Women play a critical role in the global food system, in production, preparation, consumption, and distribution.

During the last half decade, while the overall proportion of the population engaged in agriculture is declining, the percentage of female involved in agriculture is increasing (The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United, 2011). Improving educational opportunities for women has long been known to have a l. gh social return regarding decreasing infant/child mortality, and improving children's health and their education. (Shultz, 1995).

When women have more influence over economic decisions, their families can allocate more income to food, health, education, children's clothing and children's nutrition (e.g. Doss, 2006, 2014).

Types of family policy and their effects on gender equity

Regarding gender equity, early years matter, as this is the time when differences begin to open between male and female career trajectories, and demands on home production. Inevitably therefore, longer and generous parental leave policies that are provided mainly to women, do not necessarily promote gender equality in the labour market as they can encourage mothers to delay their return and thus jeopardize long-term advancement of their career (See Table 5). Childcare policies, that are not employment sensitive, can also have an effect here. When the costs of parental leave (financial, or in terms of time or productivity) are also met by employers, this can also affect gender equity as decisions related to hiring women can be uni.'rly influenced at this stage.

One caution regarding this evidence on gender equity is that it is all from high-income settings, and little has been done in terms of quality-evaluation in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, across all countries and settings – and despite the impact of family policies to influence the labour market (and labour market attachment) –

gender equality in the public sphere is also affected by unpaid domestic work and care work; policies for which need to be developed particularly in the light of growing elder care needs, and more single headed households (particularly female headed households).

Despite this high-income country focus, there are global lessons to be drawn about the effects of family policies on gender equity in the labour market, in home production, and child rearing – the most striking of which is the need to address inherent gender inequality in the design of these family benefits.

Key Messages: Family policy and Sustainable Development Goal 5

- Longer and generous parental leave policies do not necessarily promote gender equality in the labour market. They encourage mothers to delay their return and thus jeopardize long-term advancement of their career, resulting in perpetuating gender gap in economic rewards.
- Parental leave reserved for fathers, as a benefit non-transferable to mothers (daddy quota), is a promising scheme to encourage fathers to take leave from work, especially when this benefit is provided as bonus period of 'take-it-or-lose-it'. It is very important that the leave for fathers is well paid because of a strong incentive for a couple to allocate their time for paid and unpaid work according to the comparative advantage.
- Gender equality in the public sphere can never be achieved unless unpaid domestic work and care work is shared more equally in the private sphere.
- Future family policies must ensure the well-being of children while making sure that equality between genders is promoted.

It is striking to note that studies on changes to paternity leave have not evaluated the effects of policies on women's work patterns or preferences (although they do look at gender equity in home production). Work is needed here if we are to understand better the family policy effects and recent extensions to paternity leave on gender equitable employment.

Literature reviews, and cautions for learning across different development contexts

Two key ambitions set in advance of undertaking the literature reviews that contribute to the main report, were to be 'as rigorous as possible' and 'universal in regional coverage'. This meant the inclusion of only the most rigorous studies we could find and to take a 'universal' approach to reviewing the role of family policies in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by including literature from across the globe.

Inevitably, these ambitions have been met to varying extent across the Sustainable Development Goals covered, due to differences in the wealth and quality of available literature, determined by the existence and development of family policies and welfare in states across the world, and available data and resources for undertaking robust evaluation studies one form or another.

Imbalance in the wealth of data, both by regions of the world, and between the Sustainable Development Goals topics themselves, means that this study cannot claim to be fully-representative of global experiences, or to be equally balanced in terms of informing how family policies influence the different Sustainable Development Goals in different settings.

With these limitations in mind, salient cautions for interpreting the findings of this synthesis review are as follows:

1. The studies reviewed are more likely to come from higher income settings. This can influence how generalizable the findings of each study are, and how generalizable the summary findings are. It is important to not:

- Evidence from evaluations is more likely to be applicable in contexts that can replicate the socio-demographic and economic situation of study countries.
- Even in cases of similarities of social and economic contexts, the political and policy structures and systems will also determine the replicability of policies and programs from country to country. Again, evidence from evaluations are more likely to be applicable in contexts where public governance and finance structures can replicate the context of study countries.
- Some of the implications for key messages do depend on 'systems' that can provide well-trained professional staff, deliver specialized services, in stable housing. Where this is the case, readers from different settings should determine whether specific practices could be replicated in a meaningful way.
- Where systems are not immediately replicable, policymakers and practitioners should explore methods of system strengthening, reform, and capacity building (i.e. How can these systems/staff be developed/trained in lower income countries?).

2. There are no individual studies covering one region, the Middle East. There are no low-income studies in Sustainable Development Goals 5 on Gender Equity.

3. Inferences about replicability of high-income programmes and policies need to more clearly supported by cost evidence set in a broader public finance discourse. Cost evidence is not forthcoming from the studies reviewed.

Nonetheless, within these limitations, these studies are an important contribution to the global evidence base, and highlight, within their scope, the potential for well-designed family policy to set strong foundations for meeting social progress goals across the globe. Where possible, information relevant to interpreting the generalizability of findings (country of study, family-focus) has been introduced.

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United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/52

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by The Athena Fund-Laptop Computer for each Teacher, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19672 (E) 101218

Please recycle

Statement

Promoting the Status of Female Teachers and Encouraging Female Students to Study Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Most of Israel's teachers (85 per cent) are women, a figure similar to that in many other countries. Teacher salary and status is relatively low. In addition, in Israel, about 35 per cent of high-tech employees are women. However, the majority of those women (64 per cent) are employed in non-technological jobs. Managers in the industry say that most of the requests they receive for various jobs are from men. In other words, the problem is not discrimination. There is actually a very high desire in the high-tech industry to accept women and there are no barriers. Israel's Ministry of Finance says that the small number of women in this field leads to a loss of innovation and creativity that talented women could have contributed.

Why does this happen? According to the Ministry of Finance, a major reason for the small number of women employed in the high-tech industry is that fewer women choose to study the relevant scientific subjects – especially computer science, mathematics, engineering and physics – in high school, and later in post-secondary education. For example, female students constitute only 37 per cent of high-level physics students in high school, and only 31per cent of those studying computer science. Therefore, the answer is to encourage girls from an early age to study subjects that are relevant to the high-tech industry.

The Athena Fund, established in 2006, supports and empowers teachers, and works to bolster their status. This includes Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics teachers, who have a lot of influence on their students' future. By benefiting both female and male students, the Athena Fund's programs promote academic achievement among Israel's young girls, which will hopefully lead to higher university studies in subjects relevant to the high-tech industry, and more gainful employment of women in the future.

Teachers – and especially women teachers – should spearhead the transformation of Israeli schools into 21st century facilities with modern learning processes and methodologies suitable to the new digital era. To do so, the Athena Fund closes the digital gap, and makes teachers digitally literate by providing them with the required advanced equipment and professional training.

In the new connected world, teachers need to become mentors and guides for their digitally-oriented students. Teachers should strive to ensure that relevant content reaches the student's personal world to help develop his or her personality, skills and abilities.

The Athena Fund established and operates five programs: Laptop for Every Teacher in Israel (launched in 2007), Laptop for Every Kindergarten Teacher (2012), Tablet for Every Science Teacher (2014), iPad for Every Special Education Teacher (2015) and Laptop for Every English Teacher (2018).

So far, the Athena Fund, together with its partners, has provided laptops, tablets and iPads to more than 19,000 teachers across Israel, in 1,531 schools and kindergartens in 132 local authorities (municipalities, local and regional councils). Each teacher also receives 120 hours of techno-pedagogical training from professional instructors, with support from the Ministry of Education.

Two professional surveys have been conducted regarding the success of the Athena Fund's Laptop Computer for Every Teacher in Israel program. These were headed by Israel's MOFET Institute, a national intercollegiate centre for the research

and development of curricula and programs in teacher education. The first survey took place six months after the launch of the Laptop Computer for Every Teacher in Israel program in 2007, and then three years after the launch in 2011, 300 participating teachers in southern Israel where surveyed.

The surveys revealed that 99 per cent of participating teachers reported an improvement in their status in the classroom. The number of weekly classes in which teachers used the computers as teaching tools increased sevenfold. Furthermore, the number of weekly classes in which students were given tasks requiring computer usage increased fourfold.

Also, according to the surveys, the laptops helped teachers improve their teaching methods and incorporate a variety of new approaches. In addition, the teachers said that using computers as part of the learning process helped improve student achievement and behaviour. The teachers used the computers and the knowledge they gained to prepare learning materials, utilize class time effectively, and to find information for teaching purposes. In addition, improved computer skills strengthened the teacher's status in both the classroom and among colleagues, friends and family.

Another survey was conducted in 2015 among 500 teachers in youth villages. Over 60 per cent of the teachers noted that the laptop allowed for substantial improvement in the teaching process, and greatly helped them remain up-to-date in knowledge related to their work. Teachers used the laptops to find information in their professional field, such as articles and exercises, and prepare lesson materials, such as presentations and demonstrations. The laptops also contributed to improving the teacher's status.

This year, the Athena Fund is focusing mainly on its iPad for Every Special Education Teacher. The iPad helps students with special needs improve both their learning experience as well as their quality of life, both inside and outside of the classroom. iPads can also help increase student motivation to learn, along with providing opportunities for expanding horizons. In addition, the iPad improves interpersonal communication with teachers, family and the environment, and enables students to cope better with their difficulties. Furthermore, the iPad enables the student to discover new aspects of the world, including high level thinking and comprehension skills.

The program is designed to empower special education teachers in Israel and enable them to communicate better with their students. In addition, it provides access to a wide variety of teaching materials which significantly changes the lives of students. Teachers can prepare special programs for their students using the iPad, and students can continue the learning experience at home after school.

Through this Athena Fund program, about 10,000 special education teachers in Israel will receive iPads, along with special software and applications for students with special needs and disabilities. The program is being implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education's Department of Special Education.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/53

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Priests for Life, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19669 (E) 191218

Please recycle

Statement

Priests for Life believes that social protection systems for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are needed throughout the life cycle if women's lives are to be valued and protected. Imbalanced sex ratios at birth demonstrate the lack of social protection for girls in the prenatal stage of life and are a sign of lethal male preference that not only results in gender inequality but gives rise to increased violence against women and girls throughout their lives.

Beijing Platform Called for Elimination of Prenatal Sex Selection

Priests for Life reminds the Commission on the Status of Women that twenty-four years ago the Beijing Platform for Action recognized prenatal sex selection as a severe form of discrimination and violence against girls that begins at the earliest stages of life and continues unabated throughout their lives. The Beijing Platform specified that prenatal sex selection is not only an act of violence against women but is violence against the girl child in the womb. Furthermore, it called on governments to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and the root causes of son preference. It recognized that discrimination against girls and boy child preference are harmful and result in unethical practices such as prenatal sex selection and female infanticide.

The consequences of the failure to stop the lethal practice of prenatal sex selection are dire for women and girls and result in increased needs for additional social protection systems to protect them from violence throughout their lives.

Research and data from the countries most affected by sex selection and resulting imbalanced sex ratios, India and China, demonstrate the disturbing outcome from the large number of missing girls and women due to sex selection abortion — increased acts of violence against surviving women and girls. Increases in kidnappings, rapes, sex trafficking and prostitution, bride-selling, and child marriage can be seen in countries with imbalanced birth ratios resulting in unprecedented social and economic challenges due to large number of missing women and girls.

Unless concerted action is taken to stop lethal prenatal sex discrimination, sex imbalances at birth are not only expected to continue but to rise compounded by access to prenatal sex determination testing kits and access to drugs for self-induced prenatal sex selection abortion. Demographers warn in Missing Girls: A Globalizing Issue that the systemic elimination of girls before their birth is the most extreme symptom of women's contemporary undervaluation.

The identification of a girl in the womb followed by her termination is the beginning of pernicious gender-based violence that perpetuates throughout a girl's life cycle. This discrimination not only denies millions of girls their basic right to existence and grossly undermines women's empowerment, but its continued prevalence is a global failure to protect the most vulnerable girls from the most lethal form of discrimination — sex selection abortion.

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized prenatal sex selection as violence and discrimination against girls and women and urged governments to prevent and *eliminate it. By failure to prevent* this act of gendercide, governments not only fail to provide social protection to girls in the earliest stages of life but such failure results in violence against women and girls throughout the life cycle, hinders social and economic development, and jeopardizes achievement of the Agenda 2030 to "leave no one behind".

Evidence from India: Sex selection Abortion Leads to Gender Based Violence

India exemplifies the severity of the devaluation of girls' lives and consequences of sex selection abortion as 1 in 4 girls do not live past puberty; 63 million females are missing from India's population resulting in a country full of men with an imbalanced sex ratio of 112 boys for every 100 girls with a corresponding increase in crimes against women. Crime records show that reported rapes of girls have more than doubled between 2012 and 2016 and more than 40 per cent of the country's female victims of rape were minor children.

Targeted research, Population Sex Ratios and Violence against Women: The Long Run Consequences of Sex Selection in India, demonstrates that male-biased population sex ratios generate violence against women in India and reveals that violence against girls and women has increased at such rate that it is now the fastest growing crime category. Recent sex crimes data demonstrates that states in India with the highest distorted sex ratio at birth have the highest rates of sexual assault against underage girls.

Global Concern

Prenatal sex selection combined with boy child preference is increasingly not confined to countries in Asia but is evident in imbalanced sex ratios in several countries in eastern Europe including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Montenegro, and Albania, and among ethnic groups around the world with serious social and economic implications impacting women's and girls' lives and well-being.

Demographic forecasts in Missing Girls: A Globalizing Issue warn that the systemic elimination of girls before their birth and the imbalanced sex ratios that follow will continue with dire consequences and the worldwide number of missing women from 2010–2050 will rise for two more decades before peaking at 150 million in 2035.

Sex Imbalances at Birth: Current Trends, Consequences and Policy Implications by The United Nations Population Fund, also warns that the situation for women and girls is likely to further deteriorate in some regions of the world in the years to come and that present-day sex ratios among children are going to have a lasting impact on population dynamics in Asia. Projections show that in China and India, men will already vastly outnumber women of marriageable age for over two generations. Marriage estimates also alarmingly suggest that the number of single men trying to marry after 2030 might exceed for several decades the corresponding number of unmarried women by 50–60 per cent in both countries.

The projected socio-economic consequences of these trends are alarming including potential risks for increased human rights violations such as abduction, trafficking and sale of women and girls for the purposes of marriage or sexual exploitation.

Conclusion

Warnings about the impact of sex selection abortion and distorted birth ratios that result must be heeded. Unless concerted action is taken to stop lethal prenatal sex discrimination, sex imbalances at birth are not only expected to continue but to rise compounded by access to prenatal sex determination testing and access to drugs for self-induced prenatal sex selection abortion.

Social protection for girls and women from the consequences of sex selection in countries and regions where men greatly outnumber women are becoming more urgent and will continue to lead to increased acts of violence against women and girls as the world moves to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Women's and girls' progress in education and employment opportunities are likely to be affected due to the increasing threat of violence against women and girls in public and private spaces.

It has been suggested that advocacy for unrestricted access to abortion has impeded progress on the elimination of prenatal sex selection and in providing social protection to girl children in the womb.

Priests for Life calls on the Commission for the Status of Women to urgently act to end prenatal sex selection abortion; recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action as an unethical act of violence and discrimination against women and girls that begins the cycle of violence that impacts women and girls throughout their lives.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/54

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Sambhali Trust, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19671 (E) 191218

Please recycle

Statement

Full access to public education is a fundamental human right that is as yet unrealized in Rajasthan for girl children. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, enacted in 2009, guarantees that a free public education is available to all children in India until the eighth year of schooling. Today in Rajasthan, a range of challenges prevent girl children from taking advantage of this right. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act has seen success in alleviating some barriers to public education such as increasing the number of government schools and eliminating tuition fees for impoverished students. However, female enrolment rates remain low and female dropout rates remain high. These discouraging trends in female education persist largely due to socio-cultural customs and beliefs which impede the right of girls to attend school.

Objective and Purpose of Statement

Research shows that education is directly correlated with increased women's empowerment. Women with more education have lower infant mortality rates, marry later, and have more power in their household. Educated women are more likely to find employment after marriage and to educate their children. Women's education is also directly linked to the development of a nation's economy as a larger number of educated women leads to a more skilled labour force and opportunities for employment. Denying women access to public education is an obstacle to human rights and the betterment of a nation.

Girls in Rajasthan are denied access to public education due to various factors. Schools are often far away, especially in rural areas, and concerns about safety both traveling to school and at school deter parents from sending their daughters. Lack of financial resources to send children to school leads to parents keeping girls out of school as well. In addition, socio-cultural barriers to female education are enormous and almost exclusively affect girl children. In the patriarchal society of Rajasthan, girls are considered to be lesser than boys. Their access to public education is prevented both directly by parents who believe a girl does not need an education and by cultural practices that prevent girls from attending school.

In this statement, Sambhali Trust wishes to highlight three of the social and cultural obstacles that impede girls' access to public education and emphasize the urgent need to eliminate them. These obstacles are: child marriage, the perpetuation of traditional gender roles, and male preference.

Overview

Child marriage in Rajasthan is a main factor that prevents girls from accessing to public education. According to Rajasthani tradition, when young girls marry, they are expected to drop out of school in order to fulfil their duties as a wife, and it is highly stigmatized for women to pursue education after marriage. Thus, child marriage effectively obstructs the access of these child brides to education. This custom is a significant impediment to female access to education in Rajasthan, where child marriage is widespread and deeply ingrained.

Child marriage, a prevalent practice in all of India, is especially prominent in the state of Rajasthan. In 2015, more girls were married before the legal age of 18 in Rajasthan than in any other state in India. Furthermore, the perpetuation of child marriage disproportionately affects girl children. According to the 2011 Census of India, 88 per cent of the 7.4 million persons married before age 18 from 2007–2011

were girls. The correlation between child marriage and low access of girls to public education is abundantly clear in Rajasthan, where the nation's highest child marriage rate is coupled with some of the highest dropout rates for girls in the country, at 12 per cent for primary school and 72 per cent for secondary school.

The persistence of traditional gender roles in Rajasthan also contributes to the prevention of girls' access to public education. Rajasthani society is based on deep-seated patriarchal norms that exclude women from many aspects of life, including their access to public education. After marriage, women are expected to become housewives and occupy all of their time raising children, cooking, and performing all other household duties. The responsibilities of women in the traditional role of housewife means that they have neither the time nor the need for an education. Female education is therefore either given a low priority or blatantly discouraged by Rajasthani men. The pervasiveness of such gender roles results in men across the state withholding their daughters from attending school because it is a 'waste of time'.

Lastly, male preference significantly obstructs female access to public education in Rajasthan. Male preference refers to the cultural favouritism of sons and consequent disdain for daughters in a society, present in Rajasthani society and many societies around the world. The result of male preference is that sons are prioritized over daughters in every aspect of life. The extent to which male preference manifests varies between households, but often is expressed through sons receiving better or more food, better medical care, and overall better treatment in the household than daughters. Education, as well, is commonly an issue of male preference in Rajasthani households. Because boys are considered superior to girls, fathers customarily send their sons to a higher level of schooling than their daughters. Male preference in education is even further exacerbated when financial pressures are a factor; if a family cannot afford to send all of its children to public school, it will prioritize sending the sons to receive an education, while daughters receive no education at all. Consequently, many women across Rajasthan are denied their access to public education in favour of their brothers.

Specific examples of accomplishments by Sambhali Trust

Sambhali Trust fills the gap created by girls' low access to public education in the city of Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Most girls in Sambhali Trust's Empowerment Centres do not attend public school due to one or more of the aforementioned factors. Sambhali Trust is more accessible to them than public school for a variety of reasons. Sambhali Trust's Empowerment Centres are located in the middle of the communities where the girls live, so distance and travel are not large concerns. Sambhali Trust's classes take up only half the day, so girls are still able to spend the majority of their time performing their required household duties at home. Finally, vocational training in sewing is an important part of Sambhali Trust's programs in addition to academic classes. The girls' families are supportive of them learning to sew to increase their family's income. In this way, Sambhali Trust helps many girls receive an education who would otherwise have no opportunity to continue their schooling. However, there are still far too many girls in Rajasthan who have no access to any form of education.

A way forward:

The current efforts of the Indian and Rajasthani governments to increase access to public education through the provisions of The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act are admirable, but insufficient. Girls' access to public education still lags behind that of boys due to insurmountable socio-cultural barriers. Sambhali Trust fervently believes that these socio-cultural barriers must be a focus of any efforts to increase female access to public education. We at Sambhali Trust

therefore urge the Indian and Rajasthani governments to take greater action to support the empowerment of women and dismantling of patriarchal oppression in Rajasthani society, particularly in the implementation of policies and passage of laws to eliminate child marriage, perpetuation of traditional gender roles, and male preference. In pursuit of these goals, Sambhali Trust recommends state and local government increase enforcement of laws prohibiting child marriage and gender discrimination in addition, Sambhali Trust urges state and local government to take affirmative actions to increase societal awareness of women's rights and equality in Rajasthani society. The Rajasthan Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, written in 2010 to assist the implementation of The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, states: "The State Government/Local Authority shall ensure that access of children to the School is not hindered by social and cultural factors." Sambhali Trust is deeply supportive of the intent behind this policy, however this intent must be coupled with effective enforcement and implementation in order to attain full access to public education for girls in Rajasthan.

Sambhali Trust advocates for a multi-faceted approach to securing girls' full access to public education. The elimination of the aforementioned social and cultural barriers is the only way to truly achieve full female access to public education in Rajasthan.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/55

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Sociologists for Women in Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19672 (E) 101218

Please recycle

Statement

To facilitate the full citizenship and participation of women and girls in social and economic life, robust systems of social protection and public services are essential (Sustainable Development Goal 1.3). Especially vulnerable times include childbirth, childcare, and eldercare when risks and burdens fall disproportionately on women and girls. Women's participation is particularly needed in planning for sustainable, clean infrastructure to safeguard community health and support women's economic participation. During post-conflict reconstruction, women's full participation is critical for effective decision-making and implementation of inclusive systems of social protection, public services, and infrastructure.

Sociologists for Women in Society calls on Member States to pay particular attention to the following provisions for gender equality, female empowerment, and collective well-being:

Provide Job-protected Paid Childbirth Leave

Although most countries have some provision for paid maternity leave, only 41 per cent of new mothers globally receive maternity benefits (International Labour Organization [ILO] 2017, World Social Protection Report 2017-2019). Paid, job-protected leave for mothers - particularly when the leave is limited to six months - encourages female labour force participation and contributes to women's economic independence (Sustainable Development Goal 1.3). Time-off from work to care for new children with a guaranteed return to employment is good for public health, workforce stability, and family economic security. Only two nations have no national mandate for paid maternity leave: the US and Papua New Guinea (ILO, 2017). A growing number of higher-income countries provide paid parental leave to two parents (ILO, 2017). Non-transferrable, well-paid parental leave to two parents encourages caregiving roles for fathers and promotes egalitarianism among couples (Sustainable Development Goal 5.4).

We recommend that all Member States:

- Guarantee paid maternity leave to all mothers of new-borns and newly adopted children, whether in formal or informal employment;
- Enact laws granting well-paid, job-protected parental leave to partners of new mothers;
- Ensure well-paid, job-protected leave for women and their partners to address medical issues surrounding pregnancy and childbirth.

Provide Universal, Quality Child Care

Men and women's labour market outcomes diverge most after the birth or adoption of a new child. In many countries, the contemporary demands of work and absence of adequate state-provided parental supports produce mutually exclusive trade-offs between the need to work and the need to care for young children. State-supported childcare, more than any other family policy, creates options for women to return to work, facilitating higher rates of female labour force participation and thus, supporting women's economic independence. It reduces the gender pay gap, increases female pension resources, and alleviates the financial burden of widowhood at all ages (Sustainable Development Goal 1.3).

Drawing from recommendations by social scientists and family policy experts, we recommend that all Member States:

- Make steps towards provision of state-subsidized early childhood education and care centres with qualified teachers and full placement of all children in need of care;
- Expand state-subsidized child care to include younger children, shortening or eliminating the time between protected/paid parental leave and child placement in public care centres;
- Broaden state-supported before- and after-school care for school-aged children;
- Support well-qualified and well-compensated caregivers within publicly subsidized child care systems.

Provide Job-protected Paid Family Leave

To promote equal and fair labour market participation, it is important to consider that the world of care extends well beyond childbirth leave and child care systems. Children need extra parental attention during illnesses as well as routine healthcare appointments. At the same time, parents often care for elderly members of their families. An aging parent in need of increased support or a sudden disease affecting a family member can wreak havoc in the delicate balance that men and women struggle to maintain between the competing interests of family and work. The best protection for these situations is ample access to paid leave to meet the increased need for care (Sustainable Development Goal 1.3). Recent implementations by states and individual employers show that paid family caregiving leave benefits both workers and employers, lowers welfare costs, and increases family economic security. In addition, it allows female workers, including those in middle age, to remain active in the labour force.

We recommend that all Member States:

- Enact laws granting well-paid, job-protected parental leave to address short-term illnesses and necessities, like caring for a sick child or taking a child to a medical appointment.
- Enact laws granting well-paid, job-protected leave to address medical issues of aging parents or disabled family members, including taking an aging parent to the doctor or addressing a sudden care crisis;
- Design family policies encouraging both women and men to take on caregiving roles and accommodating dual earner-carer adults who participate in both paid work and unpaid caregiving (Sustainable Development Goal 5.4).

Provide Universal Education for all

Girls' education is limited in a number of countries by demands to help with domestic chores, by stereotypes that girls and women do not need education, by financial constraints, and by force. Malala Yousafzai, who was nearly assassinated for advocating for girls' education, is an important example of the difficulties girls face in becoming educated. Universal education is an essential part of the infrastructure for gender equality and female empowerment.

We recommend that all Member States:

- Guarantee universal education from pre-K through high school.
- Provide both practical education and education for critical thinking.
- Eliminate formal and informal school fees (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW], GR 34.43)
- Ensure girls' physical security in travelling to school and on school property.

Support the Development of Sustainable and Clean Infrastructure

Women and girls depend on accessible infrastructure for transportation to wage work and medical care, for market access as producers and consumers, and for safe, convenient water sources. If accessible infrastructure is not available, female economic participation is curtailed, contributing to the gender income gap and reduced resources in elder years, especially for widows. The United Nations recognizes the need for the development of sustainable, safe, and accessible transportation systems, housing, and green spaces for all (Sustainable Development Goals 11). Additionally, through the Sustainable Development Goals 9, member states have agreed to the 2030 goal to increase efficiency and adopt "clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes." These two goals work together to provide clean, sustainable infrastructure for urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Development in these areas must recognize the hidden inequalities of gender, income, ethnicity, age, disabilities, and geographic location.

We recommend that all Member States:

- Assess the impacts of energy-extraction industries (including coal, natural gas, and solar), on nearby communities, workers, and consumers, disaggregating results by gender, class, ethnicity, and location.
- Establish national plans to support full democratic participation of all people, especially women, in development plans for new infrastructure, including discussions of who controls energy sources, which energy sources are prioritized, and how transportation and housing can be improved.
- Establish national plans to increase the number of women who enter Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, (STEM) fields, including educational programs categorized under new "green" sustainability jobs.
- Ensure support for small-scale farmers, including female farmers, and a diverse, affordable supply of local food production, with resources allocated for protecting biodiversity and clean water sources.

Promote and Protect the Rights of Women During Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Conflict situations disrupt social protection systems, public services, and infrastructure. Women and girls especially bear the brunt of violent conflict but also have a vital role to play in reconstruction processes. United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) asserts that the participation of women and attention to their rights and status are critical to national peace and reconstruction processes. Women's participation facilitates safe communities that positively impact health, education, and overall well-being of women and girls.

To avoid perpetuating inequality and discrimination during reconstruction, we recommend that all Member States:

- Design reconstruction programs based on human rights principles;
- Include diverse constituents of women in post-reconstruction planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring-evaluation;
- Build strong national women's machineries, and ensure coherence between technical assistance needs for capacity-building and the provision of resources for reconstruction;
- Actively engage men working with women in the process of change and develop their capacity to understand the value of, and actively support, women's empowerment for economic and social development;

- Provide gender-advisory capacity and gender-sensitivity training for staff in all peace missions and processes; and
- Develop gender-responsive approaches early to policy formulation, budget allocations and monitoring, including through the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.

Sociologists for Women in Society educates, conducts research, and creates feminist social change to advance gender and other social equalities.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/56

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Modern Advocacy, Humanitarian, Social and Rehabilitation Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-19673 (E) 101218

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Statement

Strengthening Women and Girls' Access to Information and Opportunities for Social Protection, Public Services and Investments in Sustainable Infrastructure

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) recognizes key issues that relate to the increasing burden on Sustainable Development Goal 1 wherein the feminization of poverty is a significant problem in countries with economies in transition. This is seen as a short-term consequence in the process of political and economic transformation coupled with women's limited access to power, rigidly entrenched gender roles and other factors that may lead to insecurity for families.

Articles 3, 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) highlights States' responsibilities to ensure the equal right of men and women in the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights with respect to opportunities on favourable conditions of work, social security, freedom from hunger, highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and education directed towards the full development of the human personality in the sense of its dignity, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women(CEDAW), 1979, in its article 11 strongly reiterates the need for States to take appropriate measures in eliminating discrimination against women in the field of employment especially with concerns to equal right to choice of profession, promotion, job security, remuneration, treatment and social security in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work.

Though there exist several global normative emphasis and policy frameworks to ensure women's and girls' access to social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure, there are still multiple and intersecting inequalities that constrain their inability from benefiting from related investments especially in countries with transition economies.

The sub-Saharan African Countries' Problem Case Study

Most sub-Saharan African countries with populations living under USD 1.90 purchasing power parity per day obviously face enormous challenges in implementing huge gender insensitive structural adjustment and economic growth programs. They are usually cut-up within crossroads of newly and globally projected gender inclusive and strategic operational schemes that require huge resource consuming implementation modalities vis-à-vis their limited programme resources, including technical expertise. It therefore makes it difficult for national program dimensions to invest in effective strategies that should galvanize access and opportunities for the realization of women's and girls' economic and social rights through the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of related services as well as the adequacy of social protection benefits, such as pensions, family allowances or unemployment benefits. This therefore implies that if they are inadequacies in enhancing the aforementioned women and girl's economic and social rights, there is obviously very poor, none or very limited measures in place to assess the factual implementation of such rights.

While several sub-Saharan African countries have instituted varying national policies and structures aimed and ensuring gender equality, instances for effective women and girl's sustainable social protection schemes remain scarce. Examples

and the family governed by decrees No. 2000/001/PM of 4 January 2000, 2005/088 of 29 March 2005 and 26/0241/PM of 6 February 2010, and though reflecting huge and ambiguous provisions on the ministerial organization and functioning, these laws do not indicate how vulnerable community women and girls can access and be constantly updated on information with respect to their rights-based social protection measures and other investments for sustainable infrastructure. Governed by article 27 (3) of the Kenyan constitution, Kenya's ministry of public service, youth and gender affairs duly institutes the functions of the State department on gender affairs that seems more practical than the former but implementation measures that should provide recurrent and accessible information to vulnerable community women remain weak. With the cases of some southern African countries such as Botswana through the department of gender affairs at the ministry of labour and home affairs, Zambia via the ministry of women affairs, gender and community development, and South Africa through their department of women and women in the presidency, there seems to be a better implementation coverage for inclusive social protection and public service access for women and girls, but there are still some pertinent issues on gender-responsiveness in the quality of public services that promote access barriers for women and that lead to their rights being side-lined. For example, in area of health services, discriminatory practices and violations of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls regarding their physical integrity, privacy, confidentiality and informed consent, from denial of services to coerced medical procedures, such as forced sterilizations, and obstetric violence making reference to bullying and coercion of pregnant women during child birth. This comes with the implication that 'without proper training, clear screening protocols and referral mechanisms, health personnel are often unable to identify and adequately support victims of domestic violence; and where social norms condone violence against women, they may fail to respond or blame victims even in the face of obvious signs' (cited in the concept note of the expert group meeting on 'Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality', 2018)

More Issues to Tackle with Respect to Women's Access to information and Opportunity Remedies

In some sub-Saharan African communities, considering the exemplary case of Cameroon wherein a whole national ministry is dedicated to women empowerment and the family and governed by over 3 legally instituted decrees for its organisation and functioning, it is alarming to assess that the operational budget for such a ministry is not only very limited with respect to an effective national coverage but that women and girls are still suffering countless instances of violation on their social protection rights. The economic hardship and the on-going crisis within the English-speaking zones of the country is further degrading the situation where women and girls face health hazards including poor feeding habits or complete starvation, usage of un-sterilized or infected items or bush leaves for their hygiene and reproductive health control issues. They also faced with brutality in the form of sexual abuses, battering from hostile men and infectious bites from insects and animals. Some are forced into underage marriages leading to intimate partner relationship violence and improper or unprepared motherhood conditions, yet in all, the concerned public ministry and public services have stayed silent with no data, no statistics and no plan of action to effectively address the situation of the vulnerable women and girls whose social protection rights are continuously violated.

A Way Forward for Ascertaining Women's Social Protection, Public Services and Investments in Sustainable Infrastructure

[illegible] ignorance is the major cause of unsuccessful projections,

recourses will be the major challenge to overcome towards ascertaining the social protection rights of women. Some of the information access challenges which governments should consider include:

- Using modern technological applications including official websites and mobile apps to constantly update women and girls on recent rights based social protection issues and the nearest available resource and recourse opportunities to help them attain and maintain such rights.
- Educate ignorant and vulnerable community women and girls on the values and use of sustainable development ideologies and always seek their counsel and inputs with respect to their intimate concerns on investments in sustainable infrastructures for their benefit.
- Provide for special measures for women in conflict situations with acute attention on the abuses they face vis-à-vis that of men and put in place adequate gender-sensitive responses to address the social protection rights all victims.

Conclusion

Enhancing women and girls' social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and women empowerment through a gender-sensitive approach of data collection and analyses will not only catalyse the process of achieving the 2030 sustainable development agenda but will as well identify persistent gabs and emerging challenges through which governments and civil society actors can develop, communicate and galvanize working solutions along with the informed positions and contributions of concerned populations of women and girls as well as men and boys.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/57

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Pakistan Lions Youth Council Khanewal and Peace Foundation Pakistan, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

Social protection with gender justice is a question mark for policy makers and development promoters in Pakistan, every new government, comes with manifesto of gender friendly budgets and social protection on equity basis. Previous ruling parties also tried to provide social protection, but due to unknown reasons, they did not do. Pakistan is a developing country and most of its population lives in undesirable circumstances. A large number of people in the country do not have a proper place to live, this miserable condition has given birth to a large number of beggars and needy people to survive on the charities. The economic condition of an average individual is not encouraging. Poverty, hunger and unemployment have afflicted a large section of female population. Income-earning opportunities are few and far for the poor women of both rural and urban areas. Employment opportunities are scarce and real earnings have declined. Majority of poor women also lack all of the basic human, physical and productive assets and have limited or no access to essential social services. Pakistan has in place social protection mechanisms which are in urgent need of reform. These mechanisms limited coverage approximately 10-13 per cent of population, whereas poverty ratio is 37 per cent. Male have more numbers than females. Speaking percentage-wise, men form 51 per cent, women 48.76 per cent and transgender 0.24 per cent of the total population of Pakistan. Women were in agriculture work is 72.9 per cent in 2000 and increased to 73.1 per cent in 2017, male agriculture workers were 44.5 in 2000 and decreased to 33.9 in 2017. Female workers in Pakistan have a large number of poor and vulnerable, women are exposed to risks like natural disasters, ill health and unemployment. Women and girls usually suffer in all situations. In case of her husband's unemployed or ill, women suffer more than male in different cases. It has been observed that laws and policies to address discrimination, economic disadvantages and violence against women at the community level is the largely patriarchal structure that governs the community and households in much of Pakistan. As such, women and girls have restricted mobility, access to education, access to health facilities, and lower decision-making power, and experience higher rates of violence. These factors are not covered in social security and protection mechanisms. Thus, vulnerability in women sector increases.

It is fact that, what much funds will be available, so much people will get benefit, but here is reverse situation in Pakistan, women are fewer beneficiaries in all fronts. On the contrary, they are suffering more. In case of husband's unemployment or death, she has to suffer to more. All social protections policies from 1967, till now have gaps, they include women on receiver ends, schemes have provisions to provide money to women. Protection is more than money, it should be on equity basis. The social protection mechanisms in place for the poor include Zakat, Baitul Mal, citizen's damage compensation. labour market program and Benazir Income Support Program. For public and private employees, there exist social protection and assistance programs at the federal and provincial levels. Most of the programs are marred by operational inefficiencies, which adversely affect the desired results. are silent to provide social protection on gender base.

Looking at the poor status of women in Pakistani society, it's hard to imagine that Pakistan has been a signatory to any major international agreements on women's empowerment. Pakistani social protection system comprises three types of schemes, social security/social insurance (old age benefits, the pension and workers welfare fund respectively), social assistance for the poor (e.g. zakat, Benazir Income Support Program and labour market program (public works program. These schemes include Qarz-e-Hasna (Micro interest-free loans), Small Business Loans, Youth Training, Skills Development, Provision of laptops, and reimbursement of tuition fee of students from the less developed areas.

According to the International Labour Organization, Social Protection Report 2017-2019 Pakistan spends a measly 0.2 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product on social protection. The coverage for social protection in Pakistan is just 2.3 per cent of the total population of older persons, compared to 24.1 per cent in India; 25.2 per cent in Sri Lanka; 33.4 per cent in Bangladesh and 62.5 per cent in Nepal. This stark contrast with neighbouring and regional countries shows a deep flaw in the socioeconomic policies.

Though Pakistan started off with the rights-based approach for social protection and put in place the contributory schemes for employees' benefits and old-age pension, over the decades, the social protection policy has completely veered towards assistance to the marginalized through non-contributory, tax-financed benefits. Owing to the low spending, there is a lack of awareness about existence and availability of social protection program, Moreover, the procedural complexity makes it difficult for the vulnerable groups, including women and workers employed in informal sector, to access unemployment, health, or education-related benefits because they are not 'poor enough' to qualify for social assistance. This 'missing middle' is at a higher risk of falling into poverty in case they suffer from an economic, health or environmental shock.

The new federal government has hinted towards taking a multi-pronged approach for fighting poverty. It aims to reduce the incidence of poverty through generating jobs under the infrastructure development programs. The private sector will be encouraged to launch labour intensive ventures. In order to ensure food security, the government intends to support prices for staple food items while seeking parliamentary approval by adding a new article about 'Right to Food' in the Constitution. That is why we suggest following recommendation in this wide forum.

Recommendations:

- The social insurance and assistance programs should demonstrate flexibility and respond to the needs faced by women on equity basis.
- The social protection programs only benefit government employees. They should be comprehensively expanded to cover the unprotected vulnerable groups as women and house-based women workers,
- Social insurance programs accrue benefits disproportionately to male population and the non-poor. For not having access to social insurance programs, poor, disabled and disadvantaged, especially those in informal sectors, receive lesser benefits.
- Labour market programs are not a priority in the country. This negligence is adding to the already rising youth unemployment, critical skills gaps and hindering a large number of women from entering into the formal labour market.
- Through innovative initiatives, including employment guarantee schemes and construction of basic infrastructure that can spur local area growth, social protection program scan be used to mitigate rising underemployment. Sustainable employment opportunities can in fact lessen the long-term burden on the government budget allocated for social protection. Equally important is to realize that public sector cannot continue to finance such schemes. Ultimately, local area growth should attract private investment.
- Social protection and social assistance programs should be integrated and target oriented. These should enhance people's capacities to cope with financial shocks, natural and man-made disasters. This requires a stringent and effective monitoring system at federal and sub-national levels. The managers of social

protection programs should be asked to demonstrate results-based management with clear key performance indicators.

- Social protection programs should also have a 'vulnerability preventive' angle instead of focusing only on lending help to the already poor. This can be done through micro insurance schemes. Such schemes can particularly be useful in mitigating the impact of variable
- Existing social protection programs are overlapping and thinly distributed. Expanding protection coverage requires from the state to mobilize additional resources through widening the tax base, improving tax administration and by improving public expenditure management. At the same time, the multiplicity of programs for the same targeted population can be addressed through improved coordination between the federal and provincial governments.
- The government collects substantial amount of money in Zakat, Bait ul Mal and private sector contributions. It is important that public sector funds management should be reformed on corporate lines. A large part of these funds has recently faced depreciation in its real value for not being invested in risk-free assets.
- Finally, the grievance redressal mechanisms are weak across most of the social protection programs. There are decent examples, including disaster management authorities, Rescue 1122 and some initiatives under Benazir Income Support Program, which exhibit good models for addressing people's grievances. It is expected that these examples will be replicated across other social protection programs as well.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/58

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Presbyterian Church (USA) and Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Inc., non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The Presbyterian Church (USA) welcomes the opportunity to address the social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women. Because social protection systems, access to public services, and empowerment opportunities are even more precarious for women who are further marginalized by racism and binary definitions of gender, we highlight policies around racism and gender identity as key topics for the Commission to address.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has consistently understood our heritage to include both public witness and practical discipleship for God's justice in the world, particularly on behalf of the most marginalized in our midst. At this critical moment in history, when racism, sexism and misogyny explicitly abound throughout the current culture, causing significant spiritual and emotional violence against women, it is imperative for the church and the world to hear the voices of those long silenced.

Racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the rejection of the other, which is entirely contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. It is a form of idolatry that elevates human-made hierarchies of value over divinely-given free grace. Through colonization and slavery, the United States of America helped to create and embrace a system of valuing and devaluing people based on skin colour and ethnic identity. The name for this system is white supremacy. This system deliberately subjugated groups of people for the purpose of material, political, and social advantage. Racism is the continuing legacy of white supremacy. Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others. It is also a lie about God, for it falsely claims that God favours parts of creation over the entirety of creation.

We recognize the pervasive sin of racism. Since the invasion by Europeans, indigenous peoples have born the brutal consequences of white supremacy. And in conversations in the church around racism and racial disparities, girls and women of colour (African, Asian, Latina/Hispanic) are often overlooked, undervalued, and rendered invisible. These external views and tropes seek to dehumanize and stereotype girls and women of colour. Studies consistently demonstrate that starting at a young age, black girls are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school, a crisis that has continued repercussions for black girls, women, and whole communities. In the United States, although black girls and women are only 13 per cent of the overall population, they make up 1/3 of the people killed by police. Further, research indicates that black girls' childhoods are erased as they are viewed as needing less nurturing, protection, support, and comforting, and as more independent, knowing more about adult topics, and knowing more about sex.

On gender identity, the Presbyterian Church (USA) stands in the conviction that all people are created in the image of God and that the Gospel of Jesus is good news for all people, and affirms its commitment to the full welcome, acceptance, and inclusion of transgender people, people who identify as gender non-binary, and people of all gender identities within the full life of the church and the world. We affirm the full dignity and the full humanity of transgender people, their full inclusion in all human rights, and their giftedness for service. We affirm the church's obligation to stand for the right of people of all gender identities to live free from discrimination, violence, and every form of injustice.

These affirmations and this commitment are rooted and grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the breadth of Scripture, and in the Reformed Tradition. Scripture affirms that all people are created in the image of God. In God's creation, we see, and experience God's image expressed across a broad and life-giving expression gender.

Honouring the breadth and variety of our gender identities and expressions is one of the ways we can come to an even deeper understanding of who we are created to be in relationship to God and each other. The Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospel, and the Reformed Tradition affirm the dignity and worth of all people and call on individuals and communities to work for the well-being and protection of all people. Because we recognize that people of all gender identities are created equally in the image of God, we also recognize that we share a mutual obligation to stand for the right of all people and all gender identities and gender expression to live free from discrimination and from violence. The image of God expansively and specifically includes people of all gender identities including transgender, cisgender, gender non-binary people and people of all gender expressions.

We acknowledge that the church has fallen short of these commitments and obligations. In the world and in the church, transgender people too often experience and suffer discrimination and violence, particularly transgender women of colour who experience violence and discrimination at much higher rates than even their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual peers. The church has failed to understand fully and to celebrate adequately the full spectrum of gender embodied in God's creation. As a result, we have participated in systemic and targeted discrimination against transgender people, and we have been complicit in violence against them. We affirm the scriptural obligation to work for justice for all God's children, and particularly here to work for justice for people of all gender identities. We have fallen short of this obligation, and -by the grace of God- commit ourselves to do better and call on United Nations member states to do the same.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) calls on governments to affirm the right of all individuals regardless of gender orientation, race, or sexual identity to:

- Full legal protection for all persons against discrimination, particularly with regard to employment, housing, education and health care inclusive of full access to sexual and reproductive health options;
- Serve in the military, and every type of government and public service;
- Full access to public accommodation, including gender-inclusive restrooms;
- Protections for transgender students against violence and bullying;
- Other legal protections that guarantee and safeguard the full rights of transgender individuals;
- Provide legal protections for all persons who experience sexual and relationship abuse;
- Remove economic barriers to women's educational opportunities and promote an equitable sharing of authority and responsibilities in family life, work and society, as well as equal access to economic and political power.
- Equal protection and access to government and decision-making bodies for all races and genders.
- Fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant international agreements such as The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensure discrimination and gender biases are eliminated in local and national laws, policies and customs.